

Project Shoreditch

Key Learnings 2005-2015



Project Background

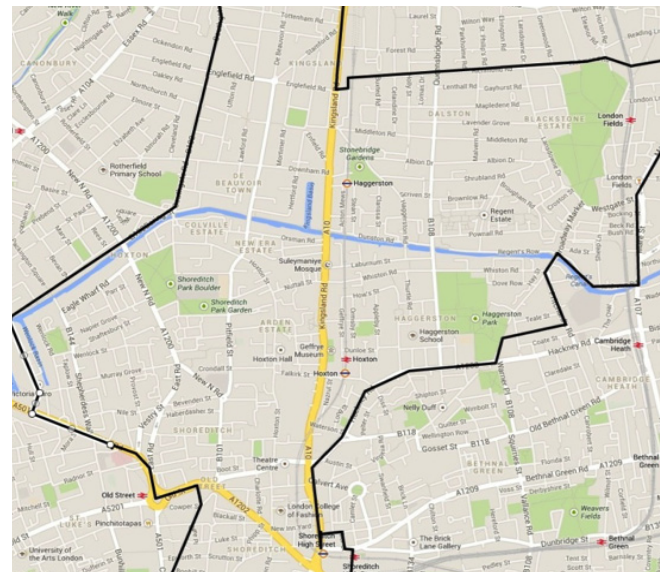
Project Shoreditch, an award-winning community investment partnership between UBS, Linklaters and East London Business Alliance (ELBA), was first established by funding from Deutsche Bank, UBS and Linklaters in 2005 to develop capacity, employability skills and local enterprise in the southern Hackney community. Project Shoreditch delivered focused employee-volunteering and leveraged support to respond directly to the needs of the Shoreditch community. The project was one of the first to bring together multiple stakeholders from across sectors to work collaboratively, making use of diverse skill sets and championing strategic partnerships in the City.



UBS & Linklaters volunteers at the One Housing 'Women's Assertiveness with young mums' workshop, 2014

After ten years of impact, working alongside a broad array of corporate and community partners, the project closed on 31 March 2015. Following careful analysis of how the community had evolved due to the success of targeted regeneration initiatives, we agreed to wrap up our focus here, focusing instead on the greater need for corporate involvement in neighbouring post codes, where fewer community investment relationships exist. We are pleased that our project focus areas have significantly benefited from our involvement- we believe it's key to evolve and know when to move on.

This Key Learnings document has been compiled by ELBA as part of a critical evaluation of our successes, designed to share our learnings with project partners and future collaborators. We know it is important to evolve a project to match a changing landscape- so we hope our shared learnings will be valuable to others, charting our experience to date.



Map showing the Project Shoreditch area in Hackney

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Changes we've seen in the socio-political landscape

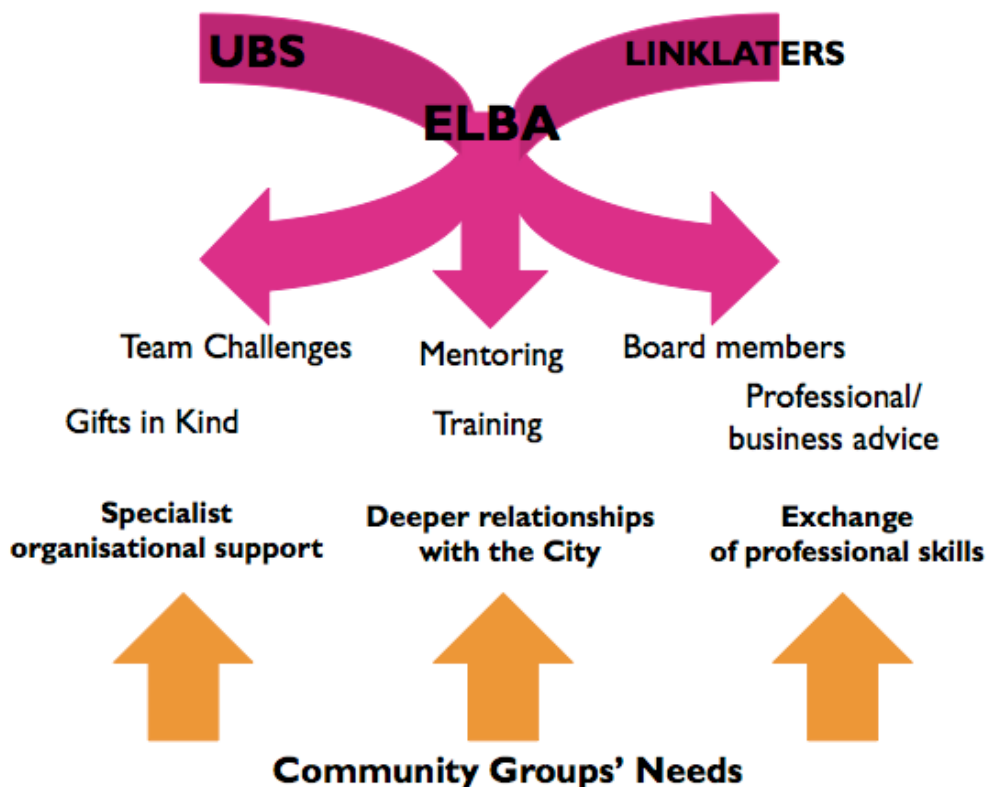
At ELBA we pride ourselves on working closely with our corporate members to understand the climate in which they work and, in best cases, we anticipate the direction their community investment may take. Here we take a step back to consider how the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda has evolved, from the language it is couched in to the attention it now receives at the highest levels of leadership.

Twenty or so years ago, the initial shoots of sustainability reporting began to spring up in the corporate agenda, revealing a growing appetite for responsible investment and recognising the benefits across organisations and sectors. Previously CSR was largely a reactive force, often tacked on to combat public perception of unpopular business decisions, now top business schools and forward-thinking organisations began advocating a holistic approach. In order to create sustainable business relationships, both within firms and across sectors, a deep analysis of how core business affects its environment became necessary.

We understood the need to align our volunteering engagement with our members' strategic priorities- hence the Embedded Project Manager model was established, pulling together stakeholders from diverse sectors to jointly tackle challenges in southern Hackney.

Our model

We designed a model that harnessed our corporate members' skills and volunteering priorities and aligned them closely with the Project Shoreditch community's needs. To ensure maximum impact, ELBA and our project backers funded an embedded Project Manager, dedicated to working at a grassroots level with community organisations to uncover opportunities to collaborate with corporate volunteers.



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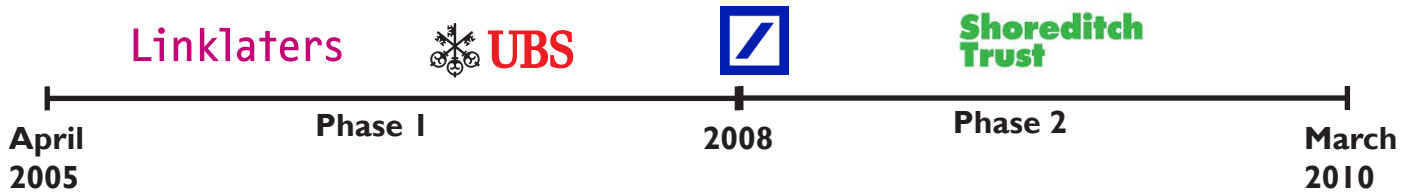
Funding the project

Project Shoreditch was born during an epoch that highly prized community cohesion, with generous funding budgets distributed through local councils and civil society organisations. Our key community partner at the beginning was Shoreditch Trust, supported by the New Deal for Communities funding from central government under New Labour.

At ELBA we have seen a move from team-based practical activities, including physical regeneration such as painting tasks, to highly-focused skills-based volunteering that challenge volunteers to employ their professional knowledge in new contexts (e.g. coaching, strategic planning, pro bono legal advice).

Over ten years of Project Shoreditch, we have worked with a variety of funders and mobilised their expertise to benefit Shoreditch.

Project funders 2005-2010: Linklaters, UBS, Deutsche Bank and Shoreditch Trust



Project funders 2010-2015: UBS, Linklaters, Hammerson and British Land (including Broadgate)



With charities facing greater pressure from funding cuts and a climate of austerity, revenue-generating social enterprise models have become increasingly important. Shoreditch has been quick to respond and we see that independent, sustainable relationships now exist between funders and local groups. As the Shoreditch area has received national attention with the arrival of 'Tech City', welcoming a wave of small businesses and start-ups around Old Street's Silicon Roundabout, they themselves are successfully opening doors for young people interested in tech-related careers. Our funding partners are now supporting neighbouring central Hackney, where the bridge between community and external investment is not yet formalised.

Today we recognise that volunteering develops skills on both sides, for volunteers and beneficiaries. ELBA is drawing directly on Project Shoreditch experience to set up a Working Group on skills development through volunteering. We are delighted that Linklaters and UBS continue to support this initiative.



Linklaters at the Big House Theatre Diversity and Drama workshop, 2014

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What we delivered from 2005-2015

Project Shoreditch has worked with:



8229 volunteers



85 corporate partners



25,613 beneficiaries supported

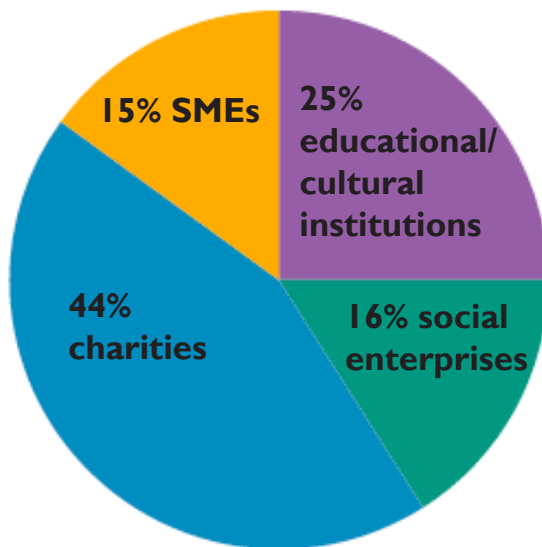


134 community organisations

Through:

- Business planning
- Strategic governance and trusteeship
- Pro bono legal advice
- Mentoring and coaching
- Practical team challenges
- General business skills, including marketing and IT support

Organisations we worked with in 2014/15



In our first year, we had no social enterprise partners. We have seen a marked increase in the number of registered social enterprises we work with: now 25% of organisations we support are defined as such, reflecting the broader shift towards social profit-generating business models.

Today 16% of the organisations we work with are Small or Medium Enterprises (SMEs) generating profit for local owners. The initial focus on SMEs reflected London Borough of Hackney's support for this sector, recognising its contribution to the local economy and potential to recruit local residents.

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Six things we've learnt

1 Measuring impact is really hard. Project Shoreditch has evolved, changed funders, strategic focus, volunteering targets, data collection and IT processes and had some natural staff turnover on each side. This means that collecting consistent data- necessary for robust impact evaluation- is a key challenge, not least because of the time resource it requires. We have used the London Benchmarking Group's recommendations to measure our impact- but the sheer variety of activities we do makes comparison across projects difficult.

2 Be humble about what you can achieve. We don't doubt that volunteering has lasting, sustainable impact, but we also acknowledge that some of the complex issues we aim to overcome require intensive investment from a range of institutions. We are not always the best placed to deliver this. For example, an employability workshop on mock interviews can be hugely beneficial to a job-seeker, but occasionally we've worked with individuals who are far from the labour market and need additional interventions from public sector bodies. Two hours of volunteering can serve as a spark in a person's life- and may well be what prompts them to seek extra support - but we must champion a joined-up approach and signpost people to our Employment Works team, but also externally, where our support is not enough. Is that impact you hope to achieve through short intervention realistic?

3 Support community partners to say 'no.' Be honest about what each partner wants from a relationship, and crucially, what they can achieve. As a broker, ELBA helps small organisations to stick to their core mission. Be mindful of a charity's key objectives and what they can't stray from etc. Sometimes small organisations want to work with large corporates- but they simply don't have the resource to manage this, and it could be to the detriment of their core beneficiaries. Clarify commitment on both sides and ensure that parties are aware of implications of last minute changes or cancellations.

4 Create momentum through good communications. Internal promotion of events works - particularly intranet postings and first-person case studies, as we saw with our new board recruit Tanya Sharma at Linklaters, who wrote a convincing article on why she felt passionately about volunteering as a trustee with Theatre Centre. We would have liked to create higher project visibility by developing links through local news sources. If you are launching a project, bring local news outlets in at the beginning to ensure you have buy-in and that you are maximising your reach - new potential partners will then contact you! (But be mindful of the implications for cost and resource!)

5 Understand partners' constraints. Submitting a long evaluation form or terms of reference document can turn partners off what might otherwise be a fruitful collaboration. Small charities do not always have capacity to complete this to the extent that corporates would like. UBS and Linklaters have both worked closely with community partners to find out what works- resulting in more effective measurement and reporting for all parties. Realise how annual funding cycles can affect employment - where possible, ensure sustainability in project team by committing 2-3 years funding at a time.

6 Have a cross-sector steering group. To ensure a genuine partnership approach, it's crucial to have representatives from every side present. This helps foster accountability and shared benefits. Remember: if Steering Group patterns change over time, so will their goals, relationship management and expectations. To help, be clear about your objectives but remain flexible and open minded. Whilst it is important to ensure you fit within your organisation's strategy, remaining flexible is critical, reflecting your landscape and partner needs.

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Top Tips for meaningful employee engagement

Use your networks

Our corporate partners have well-established employee interest networks, e.g. UBS' All Bar None (women's network) and 'Women at Linklaters'. Target your volunteering activities to match this audience: we had an instantly oversubscribed workshop when we designed a Women's Assertiveness and Leadership networking event with One Support Hackney young mums.

Use core skills

Be explicit about what your core business skills are. For example, we initially matched small start-ups with pro bono legal support, but found our legal volunteers were actually better suited to checking legal documents and providing mentoring, rather than advising on legal decisions, as their legal experience related to larger commercial client practice and didn't translate easily.

Incentivise volunteering and sharing skills

Employees often face hectic work schedules and volunteering can slip down a to-do list if you don't provide support and incentives. Highlight how volunteering develops skills by embedding volunteering targets in appraisals, thus generating buy-in from senior management.

Design workshops to help volunteers apply learnings to their jobs

Designing workshops around a shared learning experience for both volunteers and beneficiaries emphasises how applicable it is in day-to-day practice. If you start your workshop talking about job-specific skills, volunteers will interpret their material accordingly - and include this in feedback!

Understand how volunteering needs and interests vary across ranks

For instance, bright young professionals often distinguish between recruiters according to their commitment to corporate social responsibility; experienced professionals can develop their managerial or non-executive board potential by coaching community leaders or implementing strategic governance skills.

Be creative

Don't be afraid to go beyond typical activities. If you can spark a volunteer's interest, you will be rewarded with repeated engagement over time.

Engage external clients

It can be useful to engage external clients and problem-solve together in a new environment. One of our final workshops involved volunteers from an external client central to a new business deal and the positive workshop feedback resulted in a strengthened relationship.



Pitching workshop at UBS, 2014



UBS and One Support employability workshop, Oct 2014

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Ten examples of success that make us proud

S **Shoreditch Trust** was a founding member, helping us to work with the local community and key to developing our local engagement strategy. We continued to work with them beyond their direct involvement, delivering workshops with young people at Blue Marble Training.

H We secured a trustee for **Hoxton Hall** from British Land, to support their huge estate development programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. That trustee remains in place several years later and now regularly supports new volunteers interested in trusteeship.

O We took a group of corporate volunteers to **Ourmala** - a social enterprise delivering workshops to refugee and asylum-seeking women - to support women on their journey by building confidence and practicing English language. We also connected business strategy planning specialists with the founder, to support future planning activity.

R **Regeneration** - we used construction Gifts in Kind at Apples and Pears Playground, where a property developer company donated fences and floodlights, making play spaces safe and accessible for young children in Hackney.

E **ELATT** have been one of our most active community partners- welcoming teams of volunteers to support their language and IT learners in employability skills. Our involvement contributed to their being classed 'Outstanding' by Ofsted for their depth of corporate engagement.

D **Drama** workshops at Big House - using innovative engagement to discuss complex issues, such as diversity in recruitment. By placing volunteers alongside young people in the care system, engaging both in theatre practice, we opened up strong partnerships and sparked dialogue.

I **IT support** is crucial for so many of our partners. One of our volunteers, Kay at HSBC, worked remotely on developing WordPress and improving website capabilities at a new gallery space in Hoxton and a youth-focussed social enterprise.

T **Theatre Centre** took on a young trustee who works as a banking lawyer by day, but used to run a theatre company by night, demonstrating the real commitment to new talent at the most senior levels of charity governance.

C **Cross-sector collaboration** was key when responding to a local housing association's concern at the level of vulnerable young women in their care. We brought in corporate women's networks and piloted an assertiveness workshop- with 45 women present! The event has been replicated to great success across companies.

H **Headway** is a charity focusing on supporting people affected by Acquired Brain Injury. We sent a team of volunteer event managers to work alongside their staff on a pop-up fundraising supper club, generating vital funds for their work! We also placed a Communications strategist with them, helping them spread their message across sectors.

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Questions to take forward

We care about delivering projects with sustainable returns that build empowered communities, irrespective of sector. As such, there are questions we will take forward and apply in future to ensure equitable programmes. We encourage other organisations to consider these closely to help design really useful models with returns for all involved:

What is the lifespan of your project? How will you determine success and know when your objectives have been met?

Are your partners' expectations realistic? And how can you manage these?

What is your exit strategy?

How many stakeholders do you really need to ensure efficiency? Have you got the right people sitting at the table?

Closing remark from ELBA's Chief Executive

"Just as Shoreditch was becoming the centre of uber cool partying, ELBA research confirmed that some of the most deprived and disadvantaged communities in London were lurking behind the facade. ELBA and the Shoreditch Trust saw an opportunity to dig deep into the community in an effort to provide new, radical solutions and support.

With the help of some forward looking corporates; UBS, Linklaters, Hammerson and Deutsche Bank who jointly funded an embedded Area Project manager, we have had a real effect on people, charities, social enterprises and the Shoreditch area generally. The corporate interventions have been substantial, worthwhile and effective. The model works and ELBA and its members have gladly adopted this approach for the future in other areas.



Everyone involved can take some pride in their part in leaving a legacy of improved community relations and organisational and personal resilience. Well done!" **Liam Kane, ELBA Chief Executive.**

Thank you to all our key contributors over Project Shoreditch's ten year history.

Project funders (2005 – 2015): British Land, Deutsche Bank, Hammerson, Linklaters, Shoreditch Trust and UBS.

Year 10 Corporate Volunteers: Accenture, Aviva Investors, Barclays, Beazley, British Land/Broadgate Estates, City of London, Deutsche Bank, Financial Conduct Authority, J.P. Morgan, Linklaters, Moody's, Royal London, RSA Insurance Group, Societe Generale, Standard Chartered, T Rowe Price, Thomson Reuters, UBS.

Year 10 Community Organisations: Apples and Pears Adventure Playground, Artburst, Big House Theatre, Clear Village Eastside Educational Trust, ELATT, Fellows Court Community Centre, Geffrye Museum, Golden Company, Hackney Community College, Headway East London, Hoxton Hall, Hundred Years Gallery, Mill Co Project, Ministry of Stories, National Theatre, Now>Press>Play, One Support (One Housing Group), Ourmala, SeelIT Working Trust, Shoreditch Trust, Small Works Hackney, Special Olympics, St Mary's Secret Garden, The Challenge Network, The Urban Orchard Project, Theatre Centre, Toynbee Hall.